

Paul Czerlitzki - "DELAY"

24.11.2018 - 9.2.2019, Opening: 23.11.2018, 6pm

Paul Czerlitzki belongs to the young generation of post-medium artists who in an almost surgical way have been engaged in redefining painting's ontological status and its afterlife. His monochromatic canvases remind quasi-ancient statues, anti-monuments carved in stone, solid but vulnerable, fragmentary though autonomous, leaning against the wall like witnesses of heroic times long past. Their wrinkled surfaces simulate the inevitable aging and ephemerality; in other cases, they dazzle with the polished grayness of what once acted as the sublime white of the nonrepresentational. Seemingly contradictory methods of reducing/erasing on the one hand, and accumulating/amassing on the other balance the artist's interest in excess and a void of the visual. *Nothing is more fragile than the surface*, chants Deleuze while architecturing the habitat of the logic of sense. *Plain Superficiality is the character of a speech*, he echoes after Carroll. Flatness governs the pictorial field of Czerlitzki's skin-like tableaux, performances of surface tensions. *The deepest is the skin*, as Deleuze articulates the paradox of pure becoming, composed of reversals that elude the present and question fixed identities. Czerlitzki's paintings are ruins in reverse, documents of silent temporalities and memories in suspense.

With his new exhibition at Annex14, the artist further develops this self-reflection, focusing on the emancipation of painterly process and the essence of the pictorial. Entitled DELAY, Czerlitzki's immersive installation of painting's corporeality references Marcel Duchamp's groundbreaking *oeuvre* of *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23), subtitled "Delay in Glass" ("*Retard en Verre*"). Known as *The Large Glass*, Duchamp's enigmatic work attests to the artist's continued effort to abandon painting and move beyond the pictorial conventions. The notion of delay is perceived by Duchamp as a way of holding both painting and the pictorial at bay. Considered a strategy of postponement which redefines the medium itself in terms of a deferral, it is a passage that slows down the pictorial becoming of painting. *Use "delay" instead of picture or painting*, Duchamp advises, while advocating a transitional activity, composed of a sequence of interactions, suspended in time, intersecting, "indecisive reunion".

In DELAY Paul Czerlitzky appears as an archeologist of painting: his processual installation mimics an excavation site and provides an insight to a breathing space of a painterly labour. Here it is: a painting stripped bare, Duchampian *machine célibataire*, seducing its viewer/voyeur, in all its nakedness, shame and intentional incompleteness. An act of "delay" engineers a vivisection-like process of de-layer-ing: slicing through and across the matter, undressing layer by layer, dis-covering skin off the skin, a *mise-en-scène* of reality which, following Serres, *is imagined as veiled. The veil must be considered as a mixture of hard and soft: object, still, sign, already; sign, still, object, already.* Still, not yet, already, as if... A painting is exercised as a *situation* which leads *towards* the painting, while the routine of exhibition making is challenged by reversed order and identity masquerade of a gallery site (a phantom of a studio? a white cube as a palimpsest cliché?). A displacement serves as a temporary method to postpone decision making and symbolic marking of a new life to come. Czerlitzki's DELAY is a melancholic endeavor: simultaneously an act of nonchalance and a slow-motion apology; a gesture of both a withdrawal and a devotion but also an encryption and a revelation; an incessant search for an epiphany in a jaded world of deprived humility.

Adam Budak